CHAPTER III

ECONOMIC SYSTEM
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A general survey of the activities related to the economic life of the Angami Nagas today shows that most of them in the rural areas practise both jhuming or shifting cultivation and terrace cultivation, of which, terrace cultivation is more dominant. Although the Angamis of the Kohima district are predominantly the terrace cultivators, jhuming is also resorted to side by side. Trade and commerce is taken up as a bare necessity.

Terrace Cultivation

The oral tradition indicates that the Angami Nagas have been practising terrace cultivation since olden days and brought this system from their original home. It is said by the elderly Angamis that suitability of the land for terrace cultivation in the Kohima district made this area their homeland. It is stated in the Gazetteer of India, Nagaland, Kohima District, "The Angami terrace system is as old as the tribe itself, the system is believed to have been brought from its ancient home." 1

Mr. Neizovi of Kigwema village\textsuperscript{2} stated that prior to their settlement in Kigwema village they settled at Mekhroha (Makhel) village, and practised terrace cultivation but with the growth of population, they came to settle at Kigwema in search of fertile land for agricultural purposes and for better economic life. This statement may be true as the people of Kigwema village today have plenty of terrace fields in their area compared to other villages in Angami areas. It has got plenty of water sources in the way of rivers and streams which bring regular flow of water to the fields. Mr. Krusapa Sile-o of Phesama village\textsuperscript{2} a neighbouring village, shares the same view stating that their forefathers too practised terrace cultivation since time unnumerable. As most of the Western Angami and Northern Angami villages also had migrated originally from the Kigwema village, they also practise the same kind of terrace cultivation. As for example, people of Jotsoma village, who claim to have migrated to Western Angami villages, have plenty of terrace cultivation land. An interview with Mr. Pfuchuru

\textsuperscript{2} Mr. Neizovi, Aged 65 years of Kigwema village, interviewed on 23-8-1993.

\textsuperscript{3} Mr. Sile-o Krusapa, Aged 71 years of Phesama village, interviewed on 22-5-1994.
of Jostoma village reveals that they practised rice cultivation before they settled at their present village site, as they also had migrated from Kigwema village. Mr. Soukielie of Merema village said that their fore­fathers came from Khezhakeno village and before they settled in the present village also practised terrace cultivation. These villages also still practise their old system of terrace cultivation, although they have less facility of terrace cultivation because of less supply of water even during the rainy seasons.

Oral sources indicate that the Angami Naga villagers considered terrace cultivation as one of the most important economic activities since a long time and they knew the technicalities of terrace cultivation before they came to Nagaland. At the time of interview with the elderly people, an answer to query regarding the practice of terrace cultivation, the simple reply was that "the terrace cultivation is easier, takes less human labour and is a cultivation process for all time to come." Therefore, from the views and opinions mentioned above, it can be seen that the Angami Nagas adopted terrace

5. Mr. Soukielie, Aged 71 years of Merema village, interviewed on 16-8-1993.
cultivation as the chief means of their economic life. It is not only the Angami Nagas, but other Naga tribes too practise the same terrace cultivation. But the terrace cultivation mostly depend on the availability of many facilities, such as, road communication to the fields, channel, irrigation, rainfall, labours, etc. Edward Tuite Dalton says:

The communication between friendly villages in the interior of the Naga Hills are admirably kept up. The paths are of course steep and difficult, but considerable engineering skill is sometimes shown in zig-zagging and bridging them. Much of the cultivation in the village is of a permanent character, terraced and irrigated, but the glorious forests are very wantonly destroyed for the dry crops. 6

Fortunately, the Angami Naga areas have all the facilities required for terrace cultivation, such as, labour, rain water, communication, channel, irrigation and human skill compared to other tribes of Nagaland. As such, the Angami Nagas are considered more experienced in terrace cultivation processes than the other people. Mr. Kievi of Kigwema village 7 said that the Angamis are very expert in cultivation of rice since many years and

7. Mr. Kievi, Aged 65 years of Kigwema village, interviewed on 23-8-1993.
still use the same method of terrace cultivation. Further he stated that the Angamis are more advanced in cultivation than the other Naga tribes. According to them, some of the Naga tribes have learnt the practice of terrace cultivation from the Angami people. In support of the above statement, Mr. Yaviu Liegise of Nagarjan village also said that he and some other Angami friends were sent to Mon district about 35 years ago to teach the Konyak people to practise terrace cultivation and they were there for three/four years. It is stated that since that time, the Konyaks too started the terrace cultivation in a better way.

As in other parts of the plains and the hills, in the Angami areas too, different varieties of rice are cultivated depending on climatic condition, supply of water from different sources etc. Mrs. Uienguu of Khonomo village and Mrs. Kieviu of Nerhema village stated the same views that the paddy cultivation depends on water and climate. Depending on an area, whether it is cold or hot, and nature of low of water and quality of water, different kinds of paddy are to be used. G.A.

8. Mr. Liegise, Yaviu, Aged 75 years of Nagarjan village, interviewed on 15-12-1993.
Grierson stated that:

The Angamis are distinguished from the other tribes within the district by their method of cultivation, while all the other tribes, including the Western or Chakhroma portion of the Angami tribe, raise their rice crops by jhuming, the Angamis raise their crops on irrigated terraces. These terraces are excavated with great labour and skill from the hillsides, and are watered by means of channels carried long the contoury of the hills for long distances and at excessively easy gradients. 11

The terrace fields mostly belong to individuals but in some areas few belong to sub-clans (Thino or Thepfu) too. Each family has one or more terrace cultivable plots of land. J.H. Hutton says:

The Angamis have an elaborate system of terracing and irrigation by which he turns the steepest hill sides into flooded rice-fields, and in dealing with his cultivation, this terrace cultivation and 'jhuming' must be treated separately. All the Angamis, however, do not practise this wet cultivation, as the Chakhroma Angamis living near the plains have so much jhum land that they are able to live on this alone, and good jhum land, cleared once in twelve or fourteen years, is said to produce a better crop than the "Panikhets" or terraced fields. 12

Thus the Angamis consider the terrace cultivation as the better means of cultivation than the jhuming or shifting method of cultivation as it produces better harvest and its products can be preserved for longer period with less human labour. It is also said that the paddy of the terrace fields can be stored or kept more than ten years without any difficulty. This is corroborated by Mr. Khriehoulie of Nerhema village when he said that better the supply of water, better the quality of paddy which can be preserved for longer period of time. The Angamis consider the terrace cultivation processes as the most dependable one for survival and hence they took up terrace cultivation more seriously than any other ways of living since their migration to their present villages. In fact, the Angami Nagas depended so much on agricultural practices that the labour class people were found to be very less as it appears from the census record of 1991. Though the Angamis are traditionally agriculturists practising both terrace and shifting cultivation yet in view of uncertain climatic conditions affecting the agricultural products and in view

of the fast changing situations, more and more Angamis of the rural areas are going for the means of livelihood such as, business, contract works, Government jobs, etc.

Although terrace fields are used mainly for rice cultivation, it has been found that the Southern Angami people do use some terrace fields for potato cultivation prior to the plantation of rice seedlings. These fields are used for potato before the rainy season.

**Jhuming or Shifting Cultivation**

The Angamis not only practise terrace cultivation but side by side they also practise jhuming method of cultivation. The hills of Nagaland are full of evergreen forest and the lands are very fertile for jhuming. The jhum cultivation usually depends on the fertility of the soil and human labours. The jhum cultivation generally requires more labour and hard work to clear the initial forests. In many villages in Angami areas jhum lands are selected on the basis of fertility and kept for ten years or so specifically for the purpose. The land for jhum cultivation belongs to individual, sub-clan, clan and the whole village. It is stated by Mrs. Visetuou of Merema village\(^\text{15}\) that the jhum cultivation depends

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on labour and fertility of land. In the absence of these requirements, it will not yield enough products. They need to spend more time to remove weeds and unless this was done from time to time they cannot get good harvest in the jhum field. Among the Angami Nagas this jhuming method of cultivation is more practised by the Chakhro and Northern Angami region. Interviews further reveal that in early years, jhum cultivation was preferred to terrace as jhum fields could also be used as plots for other dry cultivation along with rice. Vegetables can be better grown in jhum fields than in a terrace field. In jhuming field they can put different items of vegetables like maize, chillies, potato, soyabean, beans etc. This was stated by Mr. Neirielielie of Teichuma village.\textsuperscript{16}

Another advantage of jhuming cultivation in Angami areas is that the harvesting can be done early than the terrace cultivation. This is done in the later part of September whereas the harvesting in terrace fields begins in October/November. Fields are used for jhuming only for two years, thereafter millet is preferred but of lesser economic significance. This was stated by Mrs.

\textsuperscript{16} Mr. Neirielielie, Aged 52 years of Teichuma village, interviewed on 21-2-1995.
Neilakuou of Merema village. She further said that the work of clearing weed in millet field and terrace cultivation come at the same time and so they find it difficult to work in both the fields. It is found that the Angami Nagas consider the jhuming cultivation a secondary work in their life. Imperial Gazetteer of India, Vol. XVIII also mentioned that:

The ordinary system of cultivation is known as jhum. The jungle on the hillside is cut down, and the undergrowth is burned, the larger trees being left to rot where they lie. The ground is then lightly hoed over, and seeds of rice, maize, millet, job's-tears (coin lacryma), chillies, and various kinds of vegetable dubbled in. The same plot of land is cropped only for two years in succession, and is then allowed to lie fallow for eight or nine years. Further cropping would be liable to destroy the roots of ikra and bamboo, whose ashes serve as manure when the land is next cleared for cultivation, while after the second harvest weeds spring up with such rapidity as to be a serious impediment to cultivation. 18

The Directorate of Agriculture, Nagaland Department also mentioned in their report:

One very interesting feature of this system (Jhum) of cultivation is that

almost varieties of cereals and vegetables are grown in one jhum field which is impossible in case of irrigated terraces. Besides paddy, other crops like maize, pumpkin, cucumber, chillies, ginger, colocasia, beans, yam, sesame etc. are grown. 19

Jhuming has been an activity of lesser importance now as the Government of Nagaland is discouraging the shifting cultivation because it has been found that the system engages lot of human resources and also destroys the green forest every year causing environmental problems. Not only that, it also needs human labours to work in the jhuming cultivation from time to time. There are instances among the Angami areas and in Chakhro areas where jhum fields are being used now for terrace cultiva­tions. It seemed that the practice of the jhum cultivation became less among the Angami Nagas after it attained full Statehood. Mr. Vitsalhou of Medziphema village20 stated that once the Chakhro Angami spent most of their time for jhuming but after getting Statehood they shifted to permanent terrace cultivation being aware of the ultimate effects of jhuming as a result of various educational programmees of the Government.

20. Mr. Vitsalhou, Aged 80 years of Medziphema village, interviewed on 26-7-1994.
Jhum cultivation is considered to be the most primitive form of agriculture, without using the modern technology and scientific methods for cultivation. The Government of Nagaland, therefore, introduced a new system to replace jhuming cultivation by introducing various methods. The Agriland, March 1983, a magazine published by the Agriculture Department, Government of Nagaland, stated that the:

Agro-Silvicultural methods, introduction of horticultural crops, development of livestock scheme, etc. initiated by the State Government helps bringing settled agriculture in areas of jhum cultivation. Along with the replacement of jhuming by permanent cultivation, certain alternative system of farming for increasing productivity in jhum lands, is also the objective of the Government of Nagaland in order to solve the various problems. 21

In order to replace the jhum cultivation system, the State Government of Nagaland appointed Agriculture Officer in seven districts to emphasize on more permanent agriculture production crop in different areas of the State. The Annual Administrative Report for 199^–95 stated, /*Each District is headed by the District Agriculture Officer Class - I (Senior Grade) assisted by two to three subject Matter Specialist Class - I (Junior Grade).*/ 22

The State Government of Nagaland in its Achievement Report in January, 1995, also states:

The traditional jhum cultivation which had depleted the forest and soil is being tackled on priority. The Government is now trying to wear away the people from this practice by encouraging the people to adopt terraced cultivation through incentives and other assistance. 23

**Industry**

The Angami Nagas have preserved their own industry since long ago, although it was not in a big-way compared to other people. But Angami oral traditions indicate that the Angami Nagas used to produce their own requirement in the village or for others. The important products are iron metal, arts and crafts, weaving and pottery etc. Mrs. Vihole Sale of Khuzama village 24 stated that their village people were very expert in making pottery and used to sell to other people. However, with the coming of the British it ceased to work as they brought modern materials. Mr. Golatuo Zinyu of Khonoma village 25 said that the Khonoma people were very good in crafts and blacksmith. Therefore, they used to make business out

25. Mr. Zinyu Golatuo, Aged 66 years of Khonoma village, interviewed on 16-7-1994.
of Naga baskets, spears etc. with other people which is still practised even today.

**Trade and Commerce**

Man cannot survive by means of agriculture alone. So the Angami Nagas were not only dependent on their agricultural products for their daily needs. Their tradition tells us that their forefathers practised trade and commerce in their region and outside for their maintenance and survival. Barter system was also in practice among them like any other people.

It is very difficult to mention what kinds of trade and commerce were resorted to by the early Angami Nagas. However, oral information focus on certain items of trade such as salt, ivory, tobacco, fowls, dried fish, cloth etc. The Angami Nagas seemed to have trade relations with their neighbouring villages and with neighbouring States of Assam and Manipur. Before the British invasion on Angami regions, the trade relation with the neighbouring States seemed to be very poor as the Angami Nagas were still practising head-hunting. Mr. Yakie-u Khro of Seithekiema village, said that their forefather used to trade with the neighbouring village such as

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26. Mr. Khro Yakie-u, Aged 60 years of Seithekiema village, interviewed on 26-7-1994.
Golaghat, Sibsagar etc. Mr. Neipholie of Churaukediraa village also gave an information that their grandfathers or forefathers used to contact their neighbouring areas like Lanka, Diphu (Depuka)* and Golaghat for trade and commerce. Of all these areas, Golaghat and Diphu are areas comparatively close to the Angami villages. Mr. Kehou-u of Secuma village stated that some of their village people used to go to Tezpur (Teizhupur)** to collect salt. It was stated that some of their people did not return as there was famine as a result of destruction of crops by hail-storm. So according to this version, those who did not return lived there and never came back to their villages again. In course of time, they forgot their homeland and merged with the people of Assam. From the available oral tradition, it is found that some villages in the North, Chakhro and Western Angamis people used to contact the neighbouring villages of Assam for

27. Mr. Neipholie, Aged 50 years of Chumukedima village, interviewed on 3-9-1993.

* The Angamis call Diphu as Depuka in olden days. Lanka, Diphu are towns in Assam.


** In Angami dialect Tezpur we called Teizhupur. Tezpur presently the headquarters of Sonitpur district of Assam.
trade and commerce. Although it is not known as to the kind of materials that were exchanged, besides salt, important items like fowls, cattle, cotton, ivory, elephant tusks, etc., cannot be ruled out.

In the Southern sector, the Southern Angami villages traded with Manipur State. Here also the people seemed to have been exchanging salt and other items. Mr. Phelhoukhwe of Jakhama village\(^29\) said that their villagers used to trade with Manipur. Their forefathers collected salt and dry fish from Manipur State but items of choice for the Manipuris in exchange of such items are not exactly known.

The Angamis not only traded as their means of economic pursuits among themselves but they also established trade and commerce relations with the neighbouring Naga tribes, such as, Mao, Chakhesang, Rengma and Zeliang. The Angami Nagas, particularly the Khonoma villagers were very expert in trade and commerce with, their neighbouring villages and tribes. Mr. Dokievo of Khonoma village\(^30\) said that many people of Khonoma village used

\(^{29}\) Mr. Phelhoukhwe, Aged 62 years of Jakhama village, interviewed on 23-8-1993.

\(^{30}\) Mr. Dokievo, Aged 80 years of Khonoma village, interviewed on 26-5-1994.
to go down to Zeliang areas and other neighbouring tribes for trade purposes. They used to sell goods like ivory, cowries, dao, spears etc. and bring back in return things like salt (Zeliang salt) mithun, chillies etc.

As stated earlier, Angami people practised head­hunting which stood in the way of trade relations. However, with gradual decrease in such practices, good neighbourly relations and subsequent trade relations developed with the people of neighbouring areas like Assam and Manipur. It is true that trade and commerce cannot be started unless there are human labours and preparedness for investment. This can be done only when group and personal relations are established in the villages and among the different tribes. The Angami Nagas are found to have established such a relation. Another important factor that we have found in the Angami Naga people is that they have an understanding and cooperation among themselves. Mr. Kezehol of Viswema village correctly stated that their forefathers and grandfathers were very honest, kind, truthful and understanding with one another and tried to extend cooperation with one another in whatever agreement they had made with people and keep their

31. Mr. Kezehol, Aged 72 years of Viswema village, interviewed on 26-8-1993.
words which they had made or given. According to Angami Naga oral tradition, it is found that most of the people in the villages never violated any agreement or settlement once they had made. This quality helped the Angami to a great extent in establishing trade relationship with different groups of people in and outside Nagaland.

These trade relations are also mentioned in the Imperial Gazetteer of India which runs as follows:

The Naga trade is in cotton, chillies, and boats, which, they exchange for cattle and other commodities from the plains. The most important trading villages are Khonoma, Mezoma, and Lozema, and the tribes who are keenest at a bargain are the Sema and Angamis. Members of the latter tribe sometimes go as far as Rangoon, Calcutta, and Bombay, but the Semas never venture beyond the boundaries of their own Province. 32

With the advent of the British to Naga Hills, particularly to the Angami Naga regions, some gradual improvement in the fields of agriculture, trade and commerce was noticed. The post Statehood period, however, showed a remarkable change in all aspects of life. With the improvement in communication system, people have been marching ahead with better ideas of furthering their

economic life by growing varieties of crops for both consumption and sale. In the Gazetteer of India, Nagaland, Kohima District also correctly mentioned that "The main vegetable crops comprise gourds (bottle, red and white), melon, lentils, cucumbers, spiaches, leaf mustard, onion, chillies, garlic, shallot, pumpkin and brinjals. They are grown both in homestead gardens and farms." Advances in the technological fields also helped people to have better agricultural products as stated by Mr. Neipholie of Chumukedima village. Sipra Sen says:

They (Naga) are now adopting permanent terrace-cultivation in the plain areas. The people of Nagaland were quite ignorant of the permanent cultivation. As shifting cultivation process is not much gainful for future, the Government is making efforts to bring more and more area under permanent terrace-cultivation through local farmers by demonstrating the technique and have introduced like land development, terrace Rice Cultivation Pilot Project Scheme in the hilly areas and to reclaim and bring the waste lands under cultivation in the foot-hills and in valleys. 35

The Angami Nagas are found to have achieved some economic development compared to other Naga tribes today.


34. Mr. Neipholie, Aged 50 years of Chumukedima village, interviewed on 3-9-1993.

It has got a great potential for economic betterment in different department like agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, trade and commerce and industries. Although such potentials of economic facilities existed in the present situation in Angami regions most of the Angami Nagas still prefer terrace cultivation only. Mr. Thezavilie of Kohonoma village stated that "we villagers prefer to do terrace cultivation in our life, because we have to eat, and rice we consider to be our main staple food."\textsuperscript{36}

It is evident from the foregoing discussions that economic activities of the Angami Nagas centred round agricultural productions only. As it is now, there was no promising business establishments in the early days of the Angami Nagas and barter system was the only means of exchange. The modern concept of economic status of people has come after the attainment of the State of Nagaland, sale of forest products are some of the recent ideas among the Angami Nagas as it is among other Naga tribes.

\textsuperscript{36} Mr. Thezavilie, Aged 60 years of Khonoma village, interviewed on 25-5-1994.